

Common and Cut-Leaved Teasel

Background, Life History

Both common teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*) and cut-leaved teasel (*D. laciniatus*) are herbaceous biennials or short-lived perennials that were introduced to North America in the 1700s and are currently found in Missouri. These invasive plants are closely related. Therefore, the information in this factsheet applies to both species. Common teasel was used in raising the nap on wool and other fabrics. Teasel has also been used in horticultural plantings and dried floral arrangements. Cut-leaved teasel was introduced with common teasel or perhaps brought into the United States accidentally with other plant material.

Teasel grows in open, sunny habitats in wet to dry conditions. Teasel is most commonly found in disturbed areas, including roadsides, railroads, and sandbars in streams. Teasel populations have flourished in the last 20 years due to late summer mowing along Missouri's highways. The potential exists for teasel to invade lightly managed grasslands, as well as high-quality natural areas.

Teasel grows as a basal rosette of leaves for a minimum of one year. After gathering enough resources, usually in its second year, it produces a flowering stalk and dies after flowering. During the rosette stage, leaves are oval and toothed. Older rosettes become hairy and develop a large taproot up to 2 feet long. Leaves on the flowering stems are large, opposite and joined into a cup around the stalk. Rigid stems and leaf midveins contain short prickles. Cut-leaved teasel has irregularly lobed upper stem leaves, while common teasel's leaves have smooth margins. Flowering stems may reach 5 to 7 feet.

Flowers are small and clustered into dense oval-shaped heads. Cut-leaved teasel normally has white flowers from July to September, while common teasel produces purple blooms from June to October. Stiff, spiny, leaflike structures called bracts curve up from the base of the flower head. A single teasel plant produces more than 2,000 seeds, which remain viable for several years. The seeds disperse in close proximity to the parent plant, but can be transported longer distances by water or on mowing equipment.



Common teasel flower



Clusters of teal rosettes form on bare ground left by the dead parent plant.



Flowers of cut-leaved teal are white with leaflike structures known as bracts curving up from the base. Common teal flowers are purple.



Teal is commonly found along roadsides and is spread by late season mowing.

Impacts

Individual plants can produce many offspring, due to their abundance of seed that readily germinates. Dead adult plants leave a relatively large area of bare ground allowing the seed an optimal site for germination. If left untreated, teal quickly can form dense monocultures that outcompete and exclude other vegetation. Spread is aided by disturbance or bare ground. However, teal is so aggressive that it can invade and displace native plants within high-quality prairies and savannas, as documented in other states.

Control

To control small populations, young rosettes can be dug or pulled from moist soil. Plants can also be cut at, or just below, ground level immediately before flowering to prevent later re-sprouting and flowering. Immature seed heads can still produce some viable seed so all flower heads should be removed and destroyed.

The most effective treatment is with foliar-applied herbicides. Broadleaf herbicides are preferred over nonselective herbicide to minimize effects on nontarget plants. The rosette should be treated during the growing season prior to flowering stem development to eliminate

the risk of seed production. Application during early spring will result in less harm to non-target species. Herbicide choice depends upon the location of the plants in proximity to aquatic resources and surrounding native vegetation. Effective herbicides include glyphosate, triclopyr, 2,4-D, clopyralid, aminopyralid, metsulfuron and imazapic. Teal rosettes remain green into the fall and early winter, allowing for dormant season glyphosate application. Because the plant needs to be actively photosynthesizing for herbicide uptake, dormant-season foliar treatments have had mixed results.

Prescribed burning or mowing prior to spraying may be used to reduce other vegetation and expose teal plants. However, these control methods are ineffective if used alone. Eliminating a teal population is a multiple-year effort regardless of treatment, since viable seeds persist in the soil for several years.

For Additional Information

mdc.mo.gov/landwater-care/plant-management/invasive-plant-management/cut-leaved-and-common-teasel

mdc4.mdc.mo.gov/Documents/173.pdf

www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/teasel.shtml

www.MissouriConservation.org

For more information or to report a population, contact your local Missouri Department of Conservation office, e-mail WildlifeDivision@mdc.mo.gov, or write:

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